

United States Senate

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Senators work to protect biomedical research funding from potential bias

WASHINGTON- Senators Chuck Grassley and Herb Kohl today put forward legislation that would take steps to better protect federally funded biomedical research from possible bias.

The legislation, filed as an amendment to the economic recovery bill being debated in the Senate, would place new requirements on institutions receiving grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The NIH awards almost \$24 billion annually in grants for biomedical research. The economic stimulus bill increases that largesse by billions of dollars.

The senators' amendment would require the NIH to make two changes to the way it is already supposed to manage conflicts of interest, according to federal regulation.

The Grassley-Kohl amendment would require the NIH to actively enforce its conflict of interest policies and respond in a timely manner when those policies have been violated by grantees.

The amendment also would require the following information to be given to the NIH by grantees receiving NIH in excess of \$250,000:

- a. The amount of the primary investigator's significant financial interest, estimated to the nearest one thousand dollars
- b. A detailed report on how the grantee institution will manage the primary investigator's conflict of interest.

"The goal of this initiative is to establish transparency and the accountability that comes from disclosure. It's become clear that the federal rules in place to manage conflicts of interest in research aren't enforced as they ought to be, and there's an opportunity to strengthen them here, as well," Grassley said. "The public has a lot at stake with medical research. With our doctors, we make medical decisions based on scientific research and taxpayers commit a lot of money for this work."

"NIH grants are highly competitive. The government has a right to know whether the scientists it funds have a financial stake in the outcome of their research," said Kohl.

Grassley is Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Finance. Kohl is Chairman of the Senate Special Committee on Aging.

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